

## **Strategies for the Provision of Safe Clothing for Infants in Imo State**

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### **Abstract**

This study identified the strategies for the provision of safe clothing for infants in Imo State. It answered two research questions and tested two null hypotheses. The Area of the study was Imo State. Population was made up of 354 literate and 400 non-literate mothers of child-bearing age from three senatorial zones of Imo State. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test. The findings of the study include 14 problems mothers encounter in the provision of safe clothing for their infants and 13 enhancement strategies for the provision of infants clothing. Based on the findings, recommendations were made, including establishing programmes for helping mothers acquire knowledge on the safe clothing provision strategies for their infants.

**Keywords:** Strategies, Provision, Safe clothing, Infant.

### **Introduction**

Infants need clothing to provide physical protection against cold, sun, rain and other external environmental hazards as well as for adornment. Ukpore (2006) considered warmth, comfort and neatness as the major factors to consider when providing clothing for infants. Other factors include age, weather, family standards, income, maintenance cost, cuts and fits of clothing, safety, durability, texture and activities. Clothing for the infants should be soft, light weight and easy to maintain (Anyakoha and Eluwa, 2008). Such clothing should have the capacity to absorb heat, should be cool and not irritating to the skin, simple to put on and take off. Selecting appropriate

clothing for infants at all times enhances the comfort, health and protection needed by infants for physical and mental development. This is especially important with infants of 0-3 years old whose skins are very tender.

An infant is a young person of either sex existing in a family and can be influenced by family norms, values and practices (Olaitan and Akpan, 2003). Provision of clothing for infants (0-3 years) requires a great knowledge and skills in planning and purchasing, this is because the infant's skin is very tender and is prone to infections from dirty clothes. The bones and muscles are newly formed and develop as the infant grows. Sakina (2004) is of the opinion that everything that comes in contact

with the infant must be carefully chosen since the slightest harshness might cause rashes on the infant's tender skin. Lack of Safety and Size appropriateness consideration expose infants to danger. These can harm them physically, psychologically and can even lead to death (Claire, 2005). Suitable clothing is the basic necessity that must be provided for the infants by mothers.

Mothers are often responsible for providing clothing for infants. Brown (2005) remarked that mothers should consider the infants special needs and family lifestyle when providing for infants clothing. Providing for the infants needs early in life is an interesting infant-care activity that should be preferred to all other activities in the home. Failure to meet and provide for the infants' needs quite early in life causes the infant to mistrust the world. This therefore, affects his emotional stability and relationship with others.

Wright (2003) mentioned some of the factors that will guide both literate and non-literate mothers in the choice of infant clothing. These include geographical conditions, occasion of what the clothes will be used for, age, size of the infant, texture, colour, economy, wear ability and wash ability of the clothing. No matter the geographical location of mothers, they should be sound and knowledgeable enough to select and provide appropriate clothing for their infants.

Strategy is a well planned series of actions mapped out for achieving an aim (Olaitan, 2003). Strategies for the provision of safe infant clothing are

those plans that will involve appropriate selection of clothing by all mothers to see that the safety of the infant is protected towards provision of right type of clothing for the infants in Imo State.

Clothing provision strategies of any given individual especially that of mothers in other words, is the way mothers make available the infants clothing needs for his healthy survival, growth and development, which Olusanya and Eyesi (1990) include the following: effective planning and purchasing, recycling, redesigning, home dyeing, renovation, fabric construction, self made clothing, developing a wardrobe plan for infants clothing, care, handling down clothes and evaluating clothing selection. There is no doubt that the decrease in the nation's economy affects resources for meeting these basic human needs. This makes it difficult for mothers to provide for the clothing needs of their infants. This difficulty is more with mothers with large number of children and families that live in rural areas.

According to Anyakoha and Eluwa ,(2008) many families have meager income to provide adequate clothing for infants. The inability to satisfy these basic needs as well as others is a threat to the survival of the family now that the needs and wants of the families are on the increase with limited resources to meet them. Presently, the clothing provision of infants are faced with a multitude of problems such as finance, attitude of mothers towards planning, family members attitude towards provision of clothing, lack of skill and

knowledge in selecting appropriate clothing for infants. Drake (2004) stated that mothers should be well enlightened on the need for acquiring sewing skill with the use of sewing machine as this will help to save cost. Creating opportunities for sufficient clothing construction skill to achieve effectiveness and adequate knowledge for maintain infant clothing will go a long way in assisting mothers to provide appropriate and save clothing for their infants.

Therefore, there is obvious need to evolve appropriate strategies to enhance practices adopted by mothers in the provision of safe clothing for infants in Imo State.

### **Purpose of Study**

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the strategies adopted by mothers in the provision of safe clothing for their infants in Imo State with a view to evolving ways of enhancing such strategies. Specifically, the study:

1. Identified the problems mothers encounter in the provision of clothing for their infants in Imo State.
2. Determined the strategies for enhancing the practices adopted by mothers in the provision of safe infant closing for their infants in Imo State.

### **Research Questions**

The study sought answer to the following research questions

1. What are the problems mothers' encounters in the provision of safe clothing for their infants in Imo State?

2. What are the ways of enhancing the strategies adopted by mothers in the provision of safe clothing for their infants in Imo State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following Hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H0<sub>1</sub> There is no significant difference between the mean responses of the literate and non-literate mothers on the financial problems encountered in the provision of safe clothing for infants in Imo State

H0<sub>2</sub> There is no significant difference in the mean responses of literate and non-literate mothers on the strategies adopted by mothers in the provision of safe clothing for infants in Imo State.

### **Methodology**

*Design and Area of the study:* The survey research design was adopted in this study. It was conducted in Imo State, the eastern part of Nigeria. People of Imo State are of Igbo tribe with different dialects. They are mostly farmers, civil servants, business men and travellers. The survey approach was adopted because it provided the researcher the opportunity to sample the opinions of large representative sample of population.

*Population of the study:* This comprised all literate and non-literate mothers of child bearing age (20-50 years) residing in both rural and urban areas of the twenty seven Local Government Area of Imo State. They engage in various occupations that enable them earn income for the upkeep

of the family. The population was estimated to be 15,080 out of the 1,902,613 of females in Imo State (2006, National Population Commission).

**Samples for the study:** A systematic random sampling technique was used to obtain a representative sample of 754 respondents. These were sampled from three senatorial Zones of Imo State. A total of four Local Areas were chosen from each zone. Then 354 literate and 400 non-literate mothers who are civil servants and business women were chosen from the selected Local Government Areas (754 respondents representing 5% of the population).

**Instrument for Data Collection:** The instrument used was a structured questionnaire which was developed based on the purpose of the study and extensive literature review. It was based on a five point scale and validated by three Clothing and Textile Lecturers. Reliability of the instrument was established using test-retest reliability method. Twenty [20] copies of questionnaire were administered on twenty mothers who were not part of the population. To establish and the reliability of the instrument, Pearson

product moment correlation was used. The responses were used to calculate the Pearson product moment correlation of two sections (F-G] and were found to be 0.81 and 0.96.

**Data Collection Analysis Technique:** A total of 750 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to 354 literate mothers and 400 non literate mothers by hand with the help of trained assistants. All the 745 copies were properly completed and the questionnaire recorded 100% return rate. Mean and t-test at 0.05 level of significance were used for data analysis and a cut off point of 3.5 mean was used for decision making.

**Findings:**

The following Findings were made by this study:

1. Fourteen (14) problems (socio-economic and mother related problems) mothers encounter in the provision of safe clothing for their infants were identified.
2. Thirteen strategies for enhancing the practices adopted by mothers in the provision of safe clothing for their infants were also identified.

**Table 1: Mean responses and t-test result on socio-economic problems mothers encounter in the provision of safe clothing for their infants encountered in the provision of safe clothing for their infants encountered in the provision of safe clothing for their infants.**

S/N	Problems mothers face In the provision of Infants clothing	$\bar{X}_1$ (N=300)	$\bar{X}_2$ (N=400)	$\bar{X}_g$	SD	t-cal	Remarks
1	Standard of living	4.55	4.56	4.55	0.947	0.844	NS
2	Inability to adhere to Family budget	4.46	4.44	4.45	.759	0.813	NS
3	Irregular income	4.77	4.78	4.775	.415	0.746	NS
4	Decrease in national Economy	4.62	4.61	4.615	.488	0.825	NS

5	High cost of clothing Article	4.84	4.83	4.835	.371	0.847	NS
6.	Family members attitude	3.87	3.89	3.88	.873	0.782	NS
7	Intricacies of self made Dresses	4.77	4.78	4.775	.415	0.746	NS
8	Inadequate skills for Maintaining infants clothing	4.17	4.16	4.105	.415	0.897	NS
9	Poor planning/knowledge Of clothing articles	4.39	4.39	4.39	.765	0.957	NS
10	Family location/size	4.77	4.78	4.775	.488	0.746	NS
11	Educational level of mother	5.00	5.00	5.00	.415	0.748	NS
12	Inadequate times due to Household chores	4.32	4.33	4.325	.000	0.760	NS
13	Inability to conduct inventory Before buying	4.39	4.38	4.385	.470	0.862	NS
14	Lack of good storage Facilities	4.62	4.61	4.615	.830	0.825	NS

$X_{x_1}$  = Mean response of literate mothers, S= Significant  $X_g$  = Grand Mean, DF = Degree of freedom = 752,  $X_2$  = Mean responses of grand mean, t-cal = calculated, SD = standard deviation of grand mean, T-value of each item t-tab = 1.96, NS = Not significant, N = No of respondents (Literate) = 300 Level of significant = 0.05, N = Number of respondents (non-literate) = 400

Table 1 shows Socio-economic problems and Mother related problems. Under the Socio-economic problems, all the 7 items got mean ratings of above 3.50. This implies that the respondents agree with the seven items on the Socio-economic problems encountered by mothers in the provision of safe clothing for their infants. The value of the estimated deviation ranged from .371 to .873, revealing that the opinions of the respondents are not far from each other.

Under the mother related problems had their mean values above the cut off points of 3.50. The mean ranges from 4.15 to 5.00 indicating that respondents accepted all the items and agreed that these are mother-related problems in the provision of safe clothing for their infants. The values of the standard deviation also showed that the opinions of the respondents do not vary from each other.

**Table 2: Mean responses and t-test results of ways of enhancing the practices adopted by mothers in the provision of safe clothing for their infants.**

S/N	Ways of enhancing the practices mother adopted in the provision of infant clothing	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}_g$	SD	t-cal	Remarks
1	Enlightening mothers on manner of proper clothing for infants	4.56	4.54	4.55	.488	0.762	NS
2	Creating awareness through seminar to improve on their	4.39	4.39	4.39	.497	0.912	NS

	knowledge and skills							
3	Consumer education in clothing articles	3.94	3.93	3.935	.488	0.823	NS	
4	Getting mothers well informed with multiplicity of modern technology	4.61	4.61	4.61	.622	0.912	NS	
5	Appropriate management of limited resources in providing clothing for infants	4.00	4.00	4.00	.488	0.840	NS	
6	providing infants clothing on environmental base criteria	4.17	4.16	4.165	.000	0.831	NS	
7	Selecting appropriate clothing for infants	4.33	4.32	4.325	.763	0.814	NS	
8	Care label on the fabrics must be clearly stated and followed	4.55	4.54	4.545	.820	.865	NS	
9	Gift of clothing items	4.61	4.61	4.61	.498	0.988	NS	
10	Good bargaining	4.22	4.23	4.225	.487	0.891	NS	
11	Effective use of laundry machine	4.44	4.46	4.45	.790	0.702	NS	
12	Up to date information	4.44	4.61	4.252	.497	0.002	NS	
13	Adequate wardrobe planning	4.17	4.16	4.165	.699	0.831	NS	

Table 2 show the mean rating of opinions of mothers on strategies for enhancing the provision of safe clothing for infants in Imo State. The analysis data revealed that all the items got means above 3.50. It then means that almost all the items on strategies for enhancement of infants clothing were agreed upon by the respondents. Therefore, these strategies if adopted will enhance the provision of safe clothing for infants in Imo State. The values of the standard deviation ranged from 3.94 to 4.62. This indicated that all the 13 items are the enhancement strategies mothers adopt in the provision of safe clothing for infants in Imo state.

Results of t-test on  $H_{O1}$  (Table1) reveal no significant in the mean responses of the literate and non-literate mothers. This implies that education has no significant influence on the strategies

to adopt in the Provision of Safe Clothing for Infants in Imo State.

Similarly t-test results on  $H_{O2}$  (Table 2) reveal no significant difference in the mean responses of literate and non-literate mother on the financial problems encountered in the provision of self clothing for infants. Adequate finance invariably may lead to better standard of living which may promote healthy lifestyle.

However the result of the study showed that education and finance have no significant influence on the strategies to adopt in the provision of safe clothing for the infants in Imo state.

#### **Discussion of findings**

The findings of the study on table 1 identified that mothers encounter many problems in the provision of safe clothing for their infants. These problems include Socio-economic and

mother-related problems. These findings are in line with the views of Anyakola (2009) who opined that many families have meagre income to provide adequate clothing for infants. This she further stated that mothers especially those in the rural areas are constantly faced with the challenges of clothing their infants. These challenges hinged on a number of factors such as attitudes of mothers towards planning for infants clothing, influence of older siblings, poor knowledge of clothing articles and negligence on the part of the husband.

Ahupa and Dimka (2002) further opined that mothers may be able to have the clothing they need with the limited money through wise planning. According to Drake (2004) mothers should be well enlightened on the need for acquiring sewing skill with the use of sewing machines as this will help to save costs. In line with this Drake (2004) found out the mothers fail to cloth their children properly due to lack of skill and time providing opportunities for sufficient clothing construction skill to achieve effectiveness and adequate knowledge for maintaining infants clothing will help the mothers is providing appropriate and safe clothing for their infants.

The findings as summarized in table 2 showed that enhancement strategies for clothing provision practices of mother to ensure safety are considered very important. These can easily be facilitated through assisting mothers in making clothing into more representational forms such as construction. Making and repairs of simple garments, use of washing

machines and workshop to educate mothers on how to care, launder and store infants clothing. This is in line with Sakina (2000) who stressed the importance of comfort to infants clothing. According to him, children are very active and their clothes should be made in such a way that it will not discomfort them while playing or sleeping. The result also revealed that, opportunities for redesigning and recycling clothing could be of benefits to mothers in the provision of adequate clothing for infants. These views were held by (Igbo and Oluah, 2008) that these processes extend the life span of infant clothing as well as conserving scarce resources for other needs in the family. Mothers therefore, should be well enlightened on how to redesign and recycle clothing for their infants

### **Conclusion**

Mothers in Imo State especially mothers in the rural areas are faced with problems of inadequate income for the provision of adequate clothing for their infants. Families should diversify their sources of income to be able to provide for the clothing needs of their infants and meet other family obligations.

It is also necessary to note that improper care and in adequate provision of clothing for infants may be harmful to infants' healthy development. This is due to the fact that most mothers in Imo State lack enough knowledge and skill to provide the appropriate clothing for their infants. There could be an improvement in the ways mothers provide clothing for their

infants if mothers can adopt the strategies identified by this study.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations were proffered based on the findings of the study.

1. Appropriate bodies should establish special sponsored retaining programmes on the provision of safe clothing for infants to enable Home Economics teachers to acquire knowledge which will help them teach mothers on the safe clothing provision strategies.
2. Mothers and Homemakers should be enlightened on the need to redesign and recycle clothing for their infants as well as laundering second hand clothing adequately to get rid of numerous microbes that may constitute danger to the health of the infants.
3. The findings of the study are also recommended to literate mothers through mass media with consumer education as regarding clothing to provide the required information, knowledge, attitudes and skill needed in the provision of safe clothing for infants.
4. Family literacy programmes and services should be organized and home makers for teaching new skills and guideline for provision of safe clothing infants.

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